



'We can't play with them, but we can play for them.' Perinatal bereavement support for fathers'
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Aims: In what ways does involvement in a SANDS United football team help fathers who have experienced perinatal loss?

Methods: In this qualitative study, data was collected from eleven men who had experienced a perinatal death via Skype interviews to obtain their experiences of engaging in a football team developed by bereaved father's. The data collected were thematically analysed (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Results: Four themes were identified: community belonging; grief support; memorialisation and continuing bonds; belonging to give back.

This research demonstrates that for some bereaved father's, participating in a Sands Utd football teams is a means by which to belong to a community of loss in which father's grief is acknowledged, their identity as a father and their baby validated. This is key for bereavement professionals to understand the implications of unacknowledged grief and ways in which fathers can be supported.

Conclusions: Football teams facilitated by and for supporting men following perinatal death provide a novel way to support men who otherwise have little opportunity to share their grief experiences.

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